



Celebrate

Nativity of Our Lord

In winter's deepest night, we welcome the light of the Christ child. Isaiah declares that the light of the long-promised king will illumine the world and bring endless peace and justice. Paul reminds us that the grace of God through Jesus Christ brings salvation to all people. The angels declare that Jesus' birth is good and joyful news for everyone, including lowly shepherds. Filled with the light that shines in our lives, we go forth to share the light of Christ with the whole world.

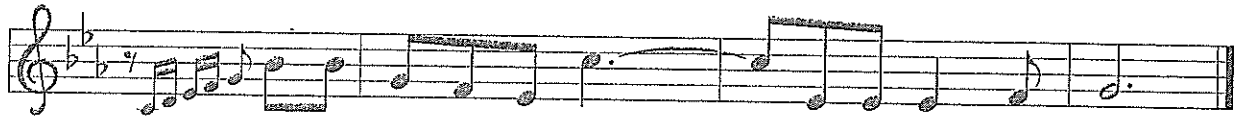
Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Isaiah 9:2-7

This poem promises deliverance from Assyrian oppression, a hope based on the birth of a royal child with a name full of promise. While Judah's king will practice justice and righteousness, the real basis for faith lies in God's passion for the people: The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep
darkness—
on them light has shined.
³You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing
plunder.
⁴For the yoke of their burden,
and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of
Midian.
⁵For all the boots of the tramping
warriors

and all the garments rolled in
blood
shall be burned as fuel for the fire.
⁶For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his
kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and
forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will
do this.



Let the heav-ens re-joice, and the earth be glad.

- Sing to the LORD ¹ a new song;
sing to the LORD, ¹ all the earth.
- ²Sing to the LORD, bless the name ¹ of the LORD;
proclaim God's salvation from ¹ day to day.
- ³Declare God's glory a- ¹ mong the nations
and God's wonders a- ¹ mong all peoples.
- ⁴For great is the LORD and greatly ¹ to be praised,
more to be feared ¹ than all gods. **R**
- ⁵As for all the gods of the nations, they ¹ are but idols;
but you, O LORD, have ¹ made the heavens.
- ⁶Majesty and magnificence are ¹ in your presence;
power and splendor are in your ¹ sanctuary.
- ⁷Ascribe to the LORD, you families ¹ of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD hon- ¹ or and power.
- ⁸Ascribe to the LORD the honor due the ¹ holy name;
bring offerings and enter the courts ¹ of the LORD. **R**
- ⁹Worship the LORD in the beau- ¹ ty of holiness;
tremble before the LORD, ¹ all the earth.
- ¹⁰Tell it out among the nations: "The ¹ LORD is king!
The one who made the world so firm that it
cannot be moved will judge the peo- ¹ ples with equity."
- ¹¹Let the heavens rejoice, and let the ¹ earth be glad;
let the sea thunder and all that is in it;
let the field be joyful and all that ¹ is therein.
- ¹²Then shall all the trees of the wood shout for joy
at your com- ¹ ing, O LORD,
for you come to ¹ judge the earth.
- ¹³You will judge the ¹ world with righteousness
and the peoples ¹ with your truth. **R**

The appearance of God's grace in Jesus Christ brings salvation for all humanity. Consequently, in the present we live wisely and justly while also anticipating the hope of our Savior's final appearance.

The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, ¹²training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, ¹³while we wait for the blessed hope

and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. ¹⁴He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Summary

Luke 2:1-14 [15-20]

God's greatest gift comes as a baby in a manger. Angels announce the "good news of great joy" and proclaim God's blessing of peace.

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day

in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,

and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

[¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.]

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Trusting in God's good news of great joy for all people, we offer our prayers for ourselves, our neighbors, and the world God loves.

A brief silence.

Glory to you, God, for the song of the angels, proclaiming to the world Christ's holy birth. Give your church a joyful song to sing, that we bring the good news of peace and salvation to all people. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the stars that shine in the depth of the night. Provoke awe in our hearts at the expansive mystery of the cosmos. Open us to find beauty in the clear darkness of night and in the first glimmers of dawn. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the child born to us who establishes a kingdom of justice and righteousness. Break bonds of oppression, bring reconciliation to warring lands, and establish peace from this time onward and forevermore. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for Mary's loving care. Lead us to tend to one another in time of need. Share the comfort of your presence with all people tonight who are alone or separated from loved ones due to estrangement, incarceration, or illness (*especially*). Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Glory to you, God, for the faithfulness of the shepherds in their vocation. Grant rest to any who feel exhausted from their work during this season: retail and restaurant workers, church musicians, administrative staff, and clergy, organizers of charitable-giving events, and service workers doing essential tasks. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Glory to you, God, for the multitude of the heavenly host. We rejoice in the zeal of all your saints (*especially*) who have witnessed the appearing of your grace, and who reveal to us your salvation for all. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

Abide with us, O God of mercy, and receive our prayers according to your abundant grace.
Amen.

Monday (Nativity of Our Lord, Christmas Day) John 1:1-14. **Tuesday** (Stephen, Deacon and Martyr) Acts 6:8—7:2a, 51-60. **Wednesday** (John, Apostle and Evangelist) John 21:20-25. **Thursday** (The Holy Innocents, Martyrs) Matthew 2:13-18. **Friday** Psalm 148. **Saturday 2** Peter 3:8-13. **First Sunday of Christmas** Isaiah 61:10—62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40.

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